



**Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional  
Hazard Mitigation Planning Project**

## **CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Performing a Capability Assessment is one step of preparing a hazard mitigation plan. A mitigation planning Capability Assessment consists of taking an in-depth look at community mechanisms (such as plans, codes, ordinances, staffing, etc.) that can affect hazard mitigation activities in a jurisdiction. Sometimes, these mechanisms are found to contribute to mitigation in a positive way - things that will *facilitate* mitigation actions. On the contrary, other mechanisms are sometimes found to have the opposite effect – things that can *hinder* the effective or efficient pursuit of mitigation actions (such as outdated policies, insufficient annual budgets, lack of an appropriate department or program, insufficient staffing, lack of appropriate legal authority, or 'red tape').

Performing the Capability Assessment is useful for two main reasons:

1. It provides information that can be used to develop an approach for Plan Integration (the step of identifying how the plan, once it is adopted, will tie into existing plans, policies, procedures, etc).
2. It documents information that will be useful for jurisdictions in developing an implementation strategy for selected hazard mitigation actions (that is, defining who in the jurisdiction will take the lead on moving forward with the mitigation action).

While sounding like an ominous task, FEMA has put together a Capability Assessment Questionnaire (attached here, from their Mitigation Planning How-To Guide #3, Worksheet #3, Job Aid #2) which for the most part, requires a series of 'yes' or 'no' responses. The Capability Assessment Questionnaire is series of worksheets which walks the preparer through a process of documenting community agencies/departments/organizations and their missions, functions, programs, plans, policies, regulations, funding, etc. of each group, in order to create an inventory of resources that can be brought to bear on mitigation efforts. It also helps preparers identify the regulatory, administrative, technical, and fiscal capacities and capabilities of each entity.

In the plan, URS will summarize capabilities at the State and Federal levels. We will also incorporate into that assessment any feedback submitted by local jurisdictions who return their completed Capability Assessment Questionnaires.

**If you have questions or need help completing the forms, please let us know. We will also set aside some time at a future meeting to assist you.**

**Please return completed questionnaires to us no later than February 20, 2008 so that we will have time to incorporate all of your information into the plan. You can submit by email, US mail, or fax, to:**

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### Worksheet #3: Local Mitigation Capability Assessment

**On the following page, list the name of the agency and its mission in the first column.** By identifying the missions and functions, as well as programs, plans, policies, regulations, funding and other practices administered by that agency, local and tribal jurisdictions create an inventory of resources that can be brought to bear on mitigation efforts within the community or tribe.

**List any programs, plans, policies, etc., this agency has in the second column.** It is important to include within this column any legal authorities (which can be found by reviewing the state capability assessment) that govern how land would be developed within hazard areas. Typically, these types of regulations are found in local zoning, building, subdivision, and other special land development codes (such as floodplain management ordinances, hillside ordinances, etc.). You should also take the opportunity to include any resources that this organization has developed for local use as part of each respective program. Include any appropriate legal citations or source references for programs, regulations, policies, etc.

**If you know a point of contact, list it in the third column.**

**Check off whether the programs, plans, policies, etc., have an effect on loss reduction.** Communities and tribes should now evaluate the effects or implications of these activities on efforts to reduce losses within the jurisdiction (fourth column). The essential questions to be answered are: Does/would this program/plan/policy, etc., support or facilitate mitigation efforts, or does/would it hinder these efforts? How or why? Put these reasons in the Comments column. At this point, you will not try to resolve any issues (such as if a particular program or policy could negatively affect proposed mitigation efforts), but the planning team will carry this information forward as input into the evaluation of specific actions in later phases of the process.

**Finally, add any other comments you may have about the agency or its activities in the last column.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Dept.: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Name (Mission/Function)	Programs, Plans, Policies, Regulations, Funding, or Practices	Point of Contact Name, Address, Phone, Email	Effect on Loss Reduction*		Comments
			Facilitate	Hinder	

**\*Definitions:** *Facilitate:* Programs, plans, policies, etc. that make implementing mitigation actions easier.  
*Hinder:* Programs, plans, policies, etc., that pose obstacles to implementation of mitigation actions.

## **Worksheet Job Aid #2: Local Hazard Mitigation Capabilities**

This job aid will assist the planning team in identifying the various capabilities and capacities in your jurisdiction when completing Worksheet #3.

Legal authority and administrative, technical, and fiscal capabilities and capacities in local jurisdictions vary greatly. It is important to recognize the capabilities and limitations of each jurisdiction in the plan.

### **Section 1: Legal and Regulatory Capability**

The following section encourages the planning team to think about the legal authorities available to your community and/or enabling legislation at the state level affecting all types of planning and land management tools that can support local hazard mitigation planning efforts in your community.

The following planning and land management tools are typically used by states and local and tribal jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities. Which of the following does your jurisdiction have? If the jurisdiction does not have this capability or authority, does another entity/jurisdiction have this authority at a higher level of government (county, parish, or regional political entity), or does the state prohibit the local jurisdictions from having this authority? You should include this information in the second column on Worksheet #3.

Name: _____ Title/Dept.: _____ Jurisdiction: _____ Email: _____				
Regulatory Tools (ordinances, codes, plans)	Local Authority (Y/N)	Does State Prohibit? (Y/N)	Higher Level Jurisdiction Authority (Y/N)	Comments
a. Building code				
b. Zoning ordinance				
c. Subdivision ordinance or regulations				
d. Special purpose ordinances (floodplain management, stormwater management, hillside or steep slope ordinances, wildfire ordinances, hazard setback requirements)				
e. Growth management ordinances (also called "smart growth" or anti-sprawl programs)				
f. Site plan review requirements				
g. General or comprehensive plan				
h. A capital improvements plan				
i. An economic development plan				
j. An emergency response plan				
k. A post-disaster recovery plan				
l. A post-disaster recovery ordinance				
m. Real estate disclosure requirements				
n. Other				

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Dept.: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: Administrative and Technical Capacity

The following section encourages the planning team to inventory existing personnel and technical resources that can be used for mitigation planning and implementation of specific mitigation actions. Think about the types of personnel employed by your jurisdiction and the public and private sector resources that may be accessed to implement hazard mitigation activities in your community.

For smaller jurisdictions with limited capacities, no local staff resources may be available for many of the categories noted below. If so, the planning team should consider public resources at the next higher level of government that may be able to provide technical assistance to the community. For example, a small town may be able to turn to county planners or engineers to support its mitigation planning efforts or a regional planning agency may be able to provide assistance. For some hazard mitigation actions, consider federal agencies that provide technical assistance, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative Extension Service, which has offices in most counties. The planning team in rural communities must be creative in identifying outside resources to augment limited local capabilities. For larger or more urban jurisdictions, this inventory task may involve targeting specific staff in various departments that have the expertise and may be used to support hazard mitigation initiatives.

You will need this information when preparing your mitigation strategy (later phases of the planning process).

Identify the personnel resources responsible for activities related to hazard mitigation/loss prevention within your jurisdiction. Does your jurisdiction have:

Staff/Personnel Resources	Yes/No	If "Yes", Identify Department/Agency and Position
a. Planner(s) or engineer(s) with knowledge of land development and land management practices		
b. Engineer(s) or professional(s) trained in construction practices related to buildings and/or infrastructure		
c. Planners or Engineer(s) with an understanding of natural and/or human-caused hazards		
d. Floodplain manager		
e. Surveyors		
f. Staff with education or expertise to assess the community's vulnerability to hazards		

Name: _____ Title/Dept.: _____ Jurisdiction: _____ Email: _____		
g. Personnel skilled in GIS and/or HAZUS		
h. Scientists familiar with the hazards of the community		
i. Emergency manager		
j. Grant writers		

### Section 3. Fiscal Capability

Identify whether your jurisdiction has access to or is eligible to use the following financial resources for hazard mitigation. Use this information to fill in the second column on Worksheet #3 and later on in the process when preparing your mitigation strategy.

Financial Resources	Accessible or Eligible to Use (Yes/No/Don't Know)
a. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	
b. Capital improvements project funding	
c. Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	
d. Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric service	
e. Impact fees for homebuyers or developers for new developments/homes	
f. Incur debt through general obligation bonds	
g. Incur debt through special tax and revenue bonds	
h. Incur debt through private activity bonds	
i. Withhold spending in hazard-prone areas	
j. Other	